

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2016

Fire Station

Chairman Kenneth Picard; Selectman Robert J. Fleming; Selectman James Brochu; Town Manager, Blythe C. Robinson; Executive Assistant, Sandra Hakala

Chairman Picard called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discuss EMS Staffing Requirements

Chief Goodale and Brain Kemp were in attendance to discuss the pathway to the future for the fire service.

Chief Goodale gave an overview of the past EMS service explaining that ALS was provided by Milford Hospital at no cost until July 2008 and ALS was provided by others at a cost of \$40,000 annually. In September 2010 EMS merged with Fire Department. With the initial ALS license date of November 2014, ALS 24/7 staffing is required within 36 months, hence the conversation.

The Chief explained the staffing challenges he now faces: members are motivated differently, volunteer commitments can be unpredictable, good weather / family commitments / weekends, situational effects, average staff age 43 years, and requirements to properly document EMS calls has affected willingness to serve.

The Chief presented two staffing options which can determine the level of service that the Town will pursue. He stated that when station is staffed the average rollout time is 1 minute; unstaffed average rollout time is 7 minutes. A commitment to service, to address the demographic changes of the Town's population, residential structures and the response expectations of residents are to be considered he stated.

Currently the CBA allows full time staff to participate in a paramedic training program with certain conditions. Selectmen Fleming inquired if this model was a viable option to offer on call staff with conditions.

The two options the Chief presented:

Option 1

- Increase Per Diem Paramedic staff to cover overnight hours.
- Cost \$55K to \$73K annually.
- Reduces compensation for medics responding on night calls .
- 365 shifts to fill each year.
- No fire coverage.
- Not permanent employees.
- Short term fix.

Option 2

- Hire 2 FF / Paramedics at cost of \$118,000 plus benefits and uniforms.

- Establishes 24 hours Career FF/Paramedic with dedicated staff.
- Eliminates need for Per Diem Medic shift on Saturdays saving \$15,000.
- Reduces compensation for medics responding on night calls.
- Apply for SAFER Grant to cover above costs for 2 years.

Option 1 was explained as short term staffing fix in order to address a long term program which will be based upon an agreed level of service. Per Diem, Selectmen Fleming expressed lacked commitment whereas Option 2 Chairman Picard agreed provided an opportunity to train more people and engage more employees in the department. It was agreed that a strategy to move toward Option 2 was needed.

The Chief explained that a SAFER grant could provide a path to Option 2. The goal of the SAFER grant is to enhance the fire department's abilities to comply with staffing, response and operational standards established by the NFPA. This two-year grant assists fire departments by paying the salaries and benefits of the SAFER-funded positions. Awarded recipients have no obligation to retain the SAFER-funded positions after the conclusion of the period of performance.

Motion #1: Motion made by Selectman Fleming to authorize Chief Goodale to pursue the SAFER grant with the understanding there is no further commitment to accept the grant if awarded at this time.

Second: Selectman Brochu, Unanimous Chairman Picard.

The Selectmen will continue to consider these recommendations at their next meeting.

Discuss FY 2016/2017 Budget

Ms. Robinson prepared a spreadsheet that shows options for tax increases between zero and 2.5%, and corresponding reductions, and reductions funded from free cash for discussion among the Board. Selectmen Fleming and Brochu favored a 0% tax increase in FY17 and Chairman Picard was amendable to a 1% increase.

They reviewed each reduction item and determined which they would defer to the Fall STM when new growth numbers would be most reliable. Ms. Robison will prepare another version of the budget based on these recommendations.

Ms. Robinson conveyed to the Board that plan design changes in the health plan could result in a 6% savings and a reduction in the school numbers would as well. The Board agreed that they would be comfortable reducing the school budget to \$250,000. Chairman Picard will relay this message to the Superintendent.

MEETING LOOK AHEAD TOPICS

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURN MEETING

88 **Motion #2:** At 8:20 pm motion was made by Selectman Brochu to adjourn the regular meeting.

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90 Second: Selectmen Fleming, Unanimous Chairman Picard.

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92 Respectfully submitted,

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94 Sandra Hakala

95 Executive Assistant